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## A research on book reading habits and media literacy of students at the faculty of education

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### Abstract

This study aims to investigate the book reading habits and media literacy of students at the faculty of education, in terms of different variables. In this context, we carried out a research to see whether there is a relation between the book reading habits and media literacy of students and their departments, grades, habits of using social media, academic grade point averages, and educational background of their parents. In addition, we scrutinised the correlation between their reading habits and media literacy and to what extent these variables account for each other. The results were obtained by using the “Attitude Scale towards Reading Habit” developed by Gömleksiz (2004) and the “Media Literacy Scale” developed by Korkmaz and Yeşil (2011). According to the results of this study, attitudes of female students towards reading are higher than those of male students. While there is a positive correlation between the reading habits, grade point averages and media literacy, there is a negative correlation between the reading habits and social media using habits. We could not notice any relation between the reading habits of students and the educational background of their parents. Likewise, there was not any relation between the social media using habits of students and the educational background of their parents, whereas there was a low-level correlation between their media literacy and grade point averages.

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## 1. Introduction

Reading is one's mental process towards a text. In its narrow sense, reading means analysing a text composed of letters and trying to interpret it as a whole. In a larger sense, reading is the reader's appropriating a literary text for himself. In other words, it is a process through which one internalises what he reads and makes use of it in every stage of his life. In this sense, reading is the most effective learning activity through which an individual can improve himself in terms of critical thinking, developing new and different perspectives, understanding himself and the world, and interpreting the events and situations he is going to encounter.

Reading is defined as a process of perceiving printed and written words through sense organs, interpreting and comprehending them, a mental and intellectual acquisition, a communicative activity with printed and written symbols, a reception, interpretation, and reaction process consisting of some perceptual and cognitive activities. (Yağcıoğlu & Değer, 2002: 34). According to Wallace (1992: 4), reading means that the reader tries, for a particular purpose, to understand the texts written by the author for a particular communicational purpose.

*"A reader ... should imagine what he is reading, understand what is argued in the text he is reading, comprehend the liaison between the thoughts in it, organise them by comparing with what he has accumulated so far, restructure his present knowledge with what he has read, and sort out what he wants to keep in his mind."* (Adalı, 2011: 7-8) This is possible only if the reader interprets, evaluates, and adopts a critical attitude while he is reading.

An individual envisages while reading and evaluates the thoughts in a text. Therefore, teaching reading is an important focal point of education. Pointing out the importance of teaching reading, Yalçın (2002: 51) argues that every stage of it should be handled studiously with scientific data. According to Yalçın, this depends on not only the efforts of teachers but also the arrangement of coursebooks and educational materials in a proper way.

Harvey and Goudvis (2007) define reading as thinking and understanding. By way of it, students can develop a structure and a strategy including the stages of activation, attribution, interrogation, visualisation, deduction, summarisation, and synthesis. From this point of view, students are expected to develop a positive attitude towards reading in order to think and read critically.

People need to be more selective and to behave more critical due to the intense flow of information to which they are exposed excessively in today's information society. It is impossible to say that all information given in the media is unbiased. It is seen that habits of watching television and using Internet prevail against the information obtained by reading or at school. This situation makes media literacy more important.

Media literacy is not a concept that is agreed on by all (Hamot, 1997). It is called alternatively as "Media Education" or "Media Awareness" (Thoman, 2008) in the relevant literature.

Today, people are expected to use mass media actively. As an educational process to help students use mass media effectively and consciously in this perspective, Media Literacy has been taught in schools as an elective course since the 2007-2008 education year. This course aims to make students be able to follow the media in a critical way for their life.

There are different definitions concerning the concept of media literacy in the relevant literature. While Thoman (1999: 50) defines media literacy as an ability to derive visual and verbal symbols from television, newspaper, radio, computer, magazine and advertisements which we encounter in our everyday life, Cantor and Wilson (2003: 363) defines it as maintaining a critical thinking ability against media violence and questioning the applications, messages and impacts of media. According to Luke (1999: 622), media literacy means integrating the abilities of media reading, following, speaking and listening with the thinking ability. Aufderheide (1993) defines it as the ability to access, analyse, evaluate and convey messages in "a variety of written and unwritten forms" (television, video, cinema, advertisements, Internet etc.). Likewise, Thoman and Jolls (2008: 33) defines media literacy as the ability to access, analyse, evaluate and create various forms of media.

Media literacy is defined as the the ability to access, analyse, evaluate and convey messages in a great variety of written and unwritten forms (television, video, cinema, advertisements, Internet etc.) (Gomez & Gomez, 2007; Manzo, 2007).

Although the above-mentioned definitions of media literacy are different from each other and focus on different aspects of the concept, these definitions commonly point out the critical attitude of people towards whatever they read, watch and listen.

It can be said that the focal point of media literacy is to analyse, to evaluate, and to maintain a questioning

attitude towards what we read and listen in printed and visual media.

Hobbs (1998) points out two aspects of media literacy evaluated by academicians and educators. The first one is critically analysing messages in the media and the second one is an individual's learning to produce his own messages. Hobbs refers to critical media literacy in the first aspect and the ability to produce media messages in the second aspect.

According to De Gaetano (2010), five basic skills are observed if an awareness of media literacy is entrenched. These are as follows:

1. Conscious and appropriate use of screen technology,
2. Ability to critique visual messages and understand their intellectual and emotional impact,
3. Ability to communicate facts, ideas, and thoughtful opinions about media images,
4. Ability to thoroughly understand media production techniques (camera angles, lighting, cuts, etc.) to fully appreciate how individuals are affected by the messages being delivered,
5. Ability to use all forms of screen technology purposefully and wisely.

As a consequence, media literacy is an important concept in terms of developing a media awareness among students and raising individuals who are able to critically view, question and evaluate the information delivered in mass media, instead of being a passive receiver and maintaining a passive attitude in front of printed and audio-visual media. In this way, children can read and view the media critically, reach a cognitive level in analysing the media language and code, and become active individuals in the process of communication instead of being passive receivers of the messages delivered in an uncontrolled way in mass media (RTÜK, 2007).

This research was carried out to investigate the book reading habits and media literacy levels of students at the faculty of education, with different variables. We try to answer the following questions:

1. Do the book reading habits and media literacy levels of students differ in terms of their gender?
2. Do the book reading habits and media literacy levels of students differ in terms of their departments?
3. Do the book reading habits and media literacy levels of students differ in terms of their grades?
4. Do the book reading habits and media literacy levels of students differ in terms of their parents' educational background?
5. Are the book reading habits and media literacy levels of students related to their social media using habits?
6. Are the book reading habits and media literacy levels of students related to their grade point averages?
7. Are the book reading habits of students related to their media literacy levels?

## 2. Method

This study aims to analyse the book reading habits and media literacy levels of students at the faculty of education in relation to gender, grade, department, educational background of their parents, grade point averages and social media using habits. Relational screening model was used in the study. *"Relational screening models are research models aiming to determine the existence and/or the degree of covariance between two or more variables."* (Karasar, 2008: 81). The data required was obtained by way of a personal information form developed by the researcher, the "Attitude Scale towards Reading Habit" developed by Gömleksiz (2004) and the "Media Literacy Scale" developed by Korkmaz and Yeşil (2011). The research was conducted in Ahi Evran University Faculty of Education in the 2013-2014 education year. The research sample is composed of 743 preservice teachers receiving education in the departments of Turkish Teaching, Primary School Teaching, Science Teaching, Social Sciences Teaching and Elementary Mathematics Teaching.

While assessing the data collected in line with the aims of this research, we carried out frequency, arithmetic mean, standard deviation, t-test, one-way ANOVA, Scheffe's test, and correlation analyses. We used SPSS 15.0 in analysing the data and assumed a significance level of 0.05 while interpreting the data.

## 3. Findings

In this section, we elaborated the results based on the data collected in accordance with the sub-problems of this research.

Table 1 Analysis Results of Independent t-Test between Point Averages of Students in Relation to Gender and the Attitude Scale towards Reading Habit

Gender	N	$\bar{X}$	Std. Deviation	T-value	Significance Level (p)
Male	250	3,99	,588	-5,350	,000
Female	493	4,21	,482		

When Table 1 is examined, it is seen that averages of students in the Attitude Scale towards Reading Habit statistically differ to a significant extent in terms of gender variable ( $p < 0,05$ ). This situation shows that reading habits differ by gender, and attitudes of female students towards reading are higher than those of male students.

Table 2 Analysis Results of Independent t-Test between Point Averages of Students in the Media Literacy Scale in Relation to Gender

Gender	N	$\bar{X}$	Std. Deviation	T-value	Significance Level (p)
Male	250	4,01	,558	,828	,408
Female	493	3,97	,507		

When Table 2 is examined, it is seen that media literacy levels of students do not differ significantly in statistical terms according to gender ( $p > 0,05$ ). This means that media literacy of students does not differ with respect to their gender.

Table 3 Results of One-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) Regarding the Points Students Scored in the Attitude Scale towards Reading Habit According to Their Departments

Variable	Department	N	$\bar{X}$	SS			
Departments They Study in	Turkish	147	4,28	,448			
	Social	118	4,19	,516			
	Science	112	4,02	,532			
	Primary School	108	4,20	,492			
	Mathematics	138	3,99	,594			
	Computer Tech.	120	4,11	,535			
	Source of Variance	Sum of Squares	Sd	Mean of Squares	F	p	Significant Difference
Intergroup	8,242	5	1,648	6,062	,000	Exists	
Intragroup	200,408	737	,272				
Total	208,649	742					

When Table 3 is assessed, it is seen that there is a significant difference between the department in which the sample group students receive education and their attitudes towards reading habit ( $p < 0,05$ ). In order to find out which department causes this significant difference, Scheffe's test was applied and its results are presented in Table 4.

Table 4 Scheffe's Test Results of Multiple Comparison Regarding the Points Students Scored in the Attitude Scale towards Reading Habit According to Their Departments

		(I-J)	SD	P	
(I) Departments	(J) Departments	Sum of Squares	F-value	Significance Level (p)	
Scheffe	Turkish	Scial	,09549	,06445	,821
		Science	,25843	,06540	,008
		Primary School	,08298	,06609	,904
		Mathematics	,29044	,06181	,001
		Computer Tech.	,17286	,06415	,203

According to these results, it is seen that there is a significant difference between the sample departments of Turkish Teaching, Science Teaching and Mathematics Teaching in terms of their attitudes towards reading ( $p < 0,05$ ). This difference is in favour of Turkish Teaching Department. There is not any significant difference between the other departments in relation to their attitudes towards reading habit.

Table 5 Results of One-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) Regarding the Points Students Scored in the Media Literacy Scale According to Their Departments

<i>Variance</i>	<i>Department</i>	<i>N</i>	$\bar{X}$	<i>SS</i>			
Departments They Study in	Turkish	147	4,01	,546			
	Social	118	4,03	,543			
	Science	112	3,84	,482			
	Primary School	108	3,90	,506			
	Mathematcs	138	3,92	,493			
	Computer Tech.	120	4,18	,510			
Source of Variance	Sum of Squares	Sd	Mean of Squares	F	p	Significant Difference	
Intergroup	8,581	5	1,716	6,458	,000	Exists	
Intragroup	195,869	737	,266				
Total	204,450	742					

When Table 3 is examined, it is seen that there is a significant difference between the departments students and their media literacy ( $p < 0,05$ ). In order to see which department causes this significant difference, Scheffe's test was applied and its results are presented in Table 6.

Table 6 Scheffe's Test Results of Multiple Comparison Regarding the Points Students Scored in the Media Literacy Scale According Their Departments

		(I-J)	SD	P	Level
(I) Departments	(J) Departments	Sum of Squares	F-value	Significance (p)	
Scheffe	Turkish	,16969	,06342	,211	
	Social	,14799	,06684	,429	
	Science	,33995	,06773	,000	
	Primary School	,27675	,06838	,006	
	Mathematics	,26047	,06435	,006	

According to these results, there is a significant difference in terms of media literacy between the sample departments of Computer Education and Instructional Technology, Science Teaching, Primary School Teaching, and Mathematics Teaching ( $p < 0,05$ ). This difference is in favour of Computer Education and Instructional Technology. There is not any significant difference in terms of media literacy between the other departments.

Table 7 Results of One-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) Regarding the Points Students Scored in the Attitude Scale towards Reading Habit According to Their Grades

Variable	Grade	N	$\bar{X}$	SS			
Grades	1. Grade	4,13	,513	,035			
	2. Grade	4,19	,491	,043			
	3. Grade	4,11	,548	,037			
	4. Grade	4,12	,552	,039			
	Source of Variance	Sum of Squares	Sd	Mean of Squares	F	p	Significant Difference
	Intergroup	,610	3	,203	,722	,539	Does not exist
	Intragroup	208,039	739	,282			
	Total	208,649	742				

When Table 7 is analysed, it is seen that there is not any statistically significant difference between the attitudes towards reading and the grades of students as p-value is  $> 0,05$ .

Table 8 Results of One-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) Regarding the Points Students Got from the Media Literacy Scale According to Their Grades

Variable	Grade	N	$\bar{X}$	SS			
Grades	1. Grade	3,99	,540	,037			
	2. Grade	3,99	,516	,045			
	3. Grade	4,01	,526	,035			
	4. Grade	3,94	,512	,037			
Source of Variance		Sum of Squares	Sd	Mean of Squares	F	p	Significant Difference
Intergroup		,540	3	,180	,652	,582	Does not exist
Intragroup		203,910	739	,276			
Total		204,450	742				

When Table 8 is assessed, it is seen that there is not any statistically significant difference between the media literacy and the grades of students as p-value is  $>0,05$ .

Table 9 Analysis Table of Correlation between the Variables, Reading Habit and Media Literacy

		Reading	Media Literacy	Grade Point Averages	Educational Status of Mother	Educational Status of Father	Social Media Using Habit
Reading	r	1	,437**	,111**	-,058	-,039	-,082*
	p		,000	,002	,112	,294	,025
	n	743	743	743	743	743	743
Media Literacy	r	,437**	1	,116**	-,018	,028	-,040
	p	,000		,002	,623	,450	,271
	n	743	743	743	743	743	743
Grade Point Averages	r	,111**	,116**	1	-,013	,002	-,082*
	p	,002	,002		,733	,954	,025
	n	743	743	743	743	743	743
Educ. Status of Mother	r	-,058	-,018	-,013	1	,451**	,017
	p	,112	,623	,733		,000	,652
	n	743	743	743	743	743	743
Educ. Status of Father	r	-,039	,028	,002	,451**	1	,036
	p	,294	,450	,954	,000		,322
	n	743	743	743	743	743	743
Social Media Using Habit	r	-,082*	-,040	-,082*	,017	,036	1
	p	,025	,271	,025	,652	,322	
	n	743	743	743	743	743	743

\*. Correlation is significant at the level of 0,05.

\*\*. Correlation is significant at the level of 0,01.

According to Table 9, there is a positively significant correlation between reading habit and media literacy ( $r=,437$ ,  $p<,01$ ). The correlation between these two variables indicates a medium-level relationship according to Cohen (1988) and Huck (2008). From this point of view, we can say that the higher the attitudes towards reading

are, the more media literacy develops among students of the faculty of education.

When we look at the correlation between the grades of students and their attitudes towards reading in Table 9, we see that the correlation ( $r=,111$ ,  $p<,01$ ) between these variables indicates a low-level relationship (Cohen, 1988; Huck 2008). The correlation value between their grade point averages and media literacy indicates likewise a low-level relationship ( $r=,116$ ,  $p<,01$ ). In other words, there is a correlation between the attitudes towards reading, media literacy and grade point averages of students, albeit at a low level.

As for the values of correlation between the attitudes of students towards reading habit and the educational status of their parents,  $r$ -values do not indicate any relationship between these variables and the attitudes towards reading ( $r=,037$ ;  $r=0,43$ ).

There is a negative and low-level relationship between the attitudes of students towards reading habit and their social media habits ( $r=-,082$ ).

Despite being at a low level, there is positive and significant relationship between the points students got from the media literacy scale and their academic grade point averages ( $r=,116$ ,  $p<,01$ ).

As for the values of correlation between the media literacy levels of students and the educational status of their parents,  $r$ -values do not indicate any relationship between media literacy and these variables. ( $r=-,018$ ;  $r=0,28$ ).

We did not find any relationship between media literacy and social media using habits of students as well ( $r=-0,40$ ).

#### 4. Conclusion and Discussion

Setting out to analyse the attitudes towards reading and media literacy levels of the students attending the faculty of education, in terms of different variables, we conclude that:

1. When the points the students of the Faculty of Education got from the “Attitude Scale towards Reading Habit” are analysed in terms of gender variable, it is seen that the difference between them is statistically significant ( $p<0,05$ ). This difference is in favour of female students, which shows that the attitudes of female students towards reading are higher than those of male students.

2. When the points the students of the Faculty of Education got from the “Media Literacy Scale” are analysed in terms of gender variable, it is seen that there is not a statistically significant difference ( $p>0,05$ ).

3. When the points the students got from the “Attitude Scale towards Reading Habit” are examined in terms of their departments, there is a statistically significant difference between the points of the students who receive education in Turkish Teaching Department and those in Mathematics and Science Teaching departments ( $p<0,05$ ). There is not any significant difference between the points the students in the other departments got from this scale. Why the students of Turkish Teaching Department maintain higher attitudes towards reading compared to the other departments can be explained by the fact that they read more books during their education. In another saying, Turkish Teaching Department includes extensive courses of literature as well as language and education.

4. When the points the students got from the “Media Literacy Scale” are analysed in terms of their departments, we observe a statistically significant difference between the points belonging to the students in the department of Computer Education and Instructional Technology and those who receive education in the departments of Science, Primary School and Mathematics Teaching ( $p<0,05$ ). We could not observe any significant difference between the points the students in the other departments got from the Media Literacy Scale. The students of Computer Education and Instructional Technology use computer and Internet more active than the students of other departments. This habit is reflected in their media literacy and so they scored better in this scale.

5. When the attitudes of students towards reading habit and their media literacy are examined in terms of their grades, there is not any significant difference between the grades ( $p>0,05$ ).

6. As for the values of correlation between the variables and the attitudes of students towards reading habit, we see that there is a positive and significant relation between reading habit and media literacy ( $r=,437$ ,  $p<,01$ ). This situation shows that the higher their attitudes towards reading are, the higher their levels of media literacy are. In other words, the more people read, the more critical attitude they adopt towards the events and situations they encounter. Such a critical attitude towards events and situations is key to media literacy as well. Although there is a positive and significant relation between the attitudes of students towards reading and their academic grade point averages, this relation is at a low level ( $r=,111$ ,  $p<,01$ ). As for the values of correlation between the attitudes of



students towards reading and the educational status of their parents, r-values show that there is not a relation between these variables ( $r=,037$ ;  $r=,043$ ). There is a negative and low-level relation between the attitudes of students towards reading and their social media using habits ( $r=-,082$ ). This relation can be interpreted as an indicator of the fact that the higher the attitudes of students towards reading are, the higher their levels of media literacy will be.

7. Although there is a positive and significant relation between the students' grade point averages and the points they scored in the media literacy scale, this relation is at a low level ( $r=,116$ ,  $p<,01$ ). As for the values of correlation between the media literacy levels of students and the educational status of their parents, r-values do not indicate a relation between these variables ( $r=-,018$ ;  $r=,028$ ). We could not observe any relationship between the media literacy and social media using habits of students ( $r=-,040$ ).

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